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DOCUMENTS

A JOURNAL OF LIFE IN WISCONSIN ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

KEPT BY WILLARD KEYES OF NEWFANE, VERMONT¹

June 2^d One year since I left Newfane, Vermont—at that time little did I think of wandering thus far— Where I shall be one year from this, God only knows—whether in time, or in Eternity! What an awful thought— Yet true it is, my journey through time is already commenced—the distance of the way is unknown to me; but the valley of Death I must surely pass, and then comes a never ending Eternity!

A boat arrives from St. Louis—Lt. (now Cap^t.) Hickman arrives, and takes the command here—Col. Chambers starts immediately for Bell-Fontaine—

June 3^d Mr- Shaw arrives with a boat laden with whiskey, Pecans, &C.

June 4th A third boat arrives, heavy laden

June 5th A hard shower with thunder and lightning, last night—a fourth arrival from St. Louis— Whiskey being plenty, drunken people are, likewise—

June 7th Sabbath—horseracing and boxing are the order of the day—

June 8th Very warm—Mosketoes begin to be troublesome—a canoe arrives from Mackinaw in 10 days—brings no news worth remarking—

June 10th Several boats start for Mackinaw—forward a letter to Dr Peters—

June 11th A remarkable heavy shower last night, thunder and lightning—morning cool and pleasant—mid day another shower—my house leaky—it stands about 8 feet higher than the brink of the river and 6 rods therefrom—

June 14th Sabbath—the militia muster several delinquents tried by a court-martial—I have not been called upon yet Mr. Nathaniel Shaw starts on his [trip] to the state of Newyork—expects to pass through Ellicott—

¹ Continued from the March issue. For a short account of this journal see THE WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY, III, 268-70.

June 15th Green Peas and ripe strawberries— Evning—a large Schooner like boat comming in under sail—said to be 80 or 100 tons burthen—

June 19th Rolette starts for Mackinaw— Write to Dr. Peters—we have his buisness, to appearance, in a favorable way—

June 21^t Sabbath—very warm—Indians dancing through the streets this is common—they are mostly naked except a breech clout—and painted all colours

June 28th Sabbath—Refreshing wind A fleet of Winnibago Canoes arrive—from the “Wisconsin”—they encamp on the island opposite the town—

June 29th high wind and cool—

“ 30th General muster of the troops the Winnibagoes have a screaming dance or powwow through the streets

Eve—Lt. Armstrong returns from St. Louis—

July the fourth—Anniversary of American Independence, announced by the discharge of Cannon—the troops march out and fire a Federal Salute by platoons—they make a handsome appearance—the French citizens refuse to celebrate the day, saying it is no holiday for them—which draws many reproaches on them by the Americans—

July 5th Sabbath—Commence boarding with Mr St. Cyre—very warm weather

July 7th Remove my school to Mr. Johnsons store—

July 9th Lt- Shade starts for Bell Fontaine

July 11th Yesterday and today uncommonly warm—the mercury in Mr- Johnsons thermometer arose to 103 and 104 a band of Souix Indians come in, and dance what is called the “Buffaloe dance” they wear on their heads large Buffaloe pates with the horns, and shaggy wool or hair more a foot long giving them a hedios appearance

July 12th Sabbath—rather cooler—some wind thunder and appearance of rain—

July 13 Lt. Fields starts from hence—there is but two commissioned officers left, and about one hundred and fifty men

July 25th two months since I began school have about 20 pupils—several who have subscribed have never sent—not considering they are obligated to pay their subscription

July 26 Sabbath Cucumbers for the first time

“ 28th Rise early and go into the river to bathe, practice it twice or thrice a week

July 30th Remove to the schoolhouse, just finished it stands about 12 rods back of the main street—people begin to harvest their wheat

August 1^t Several showers of rain, my new habitation roof leaky—spend my leisure hours in reading borrowed books or Newspapers—

Sabbath morn—August 2^d Rise at Revilee about day break—proceed to the river and bathe—read in the Bible till Breakfast— Walk into the country to Mr Ayrds mill Mr Andrews has it nearly ready for running— Eve—read the Scriptures—O! that one spark of heavenly love might kindle in my breast the flame of pure devotion

Aug. 6th Rise at day break—had a tremendous shower last night—thunder and lightni[n]g remarkably sharp and heavy—sudden change in the weather from hot to cold. . . . People are in anxious expectation of boats from Mackinaw

Aug. 8th Being saturday keep school but half of the day—cloudy and rainy—dull times at present—

Aug. 9th Sabbath Pleasant and Cool— Gambling, horseracing and dancing are the order of the day

How frail is human Nature! when we resolve to be pure before God, then quickly comes some vice or earthly vanity, breaks the specious charm of virtue and shews our real character

Sabbath Eve. finish reading my Bible through by course, which I commenced just one year and three months before

Aug 10th People are very busy in harvesting

Aug. 13th A Boat from St Louis—for mr- Botillia²— A few Newspapers

Aug. 16th Sabbath—Borrow some Newspapers of Mr Boilvin,³ Indian Agt. Read in the Western Monitor several Pieces of Religious intelligence calculated to awaken the stupid senses to the concerns of immortality—

² François Bouthillier, an early resident of Prairie du Chien. In 1819 he was an associate judge of Crawford County. In 1832 he removed to Fever (Galena) River.

³ Nicolas Boilvin, a native of Canada, came to Spanish Louisiana in 1774. In 1806 he was appointed assistant Indian agent to the Sauk at the Des Moines Rapids of the Mississippi; two years later he removed to Prairie du Chien to assume the duties of John Campbell, agent at that place, who had been killed in a duel. In the War of 1812 Boilvin sided with the Americans, for which course he was forced temporarily to abandon Prairie du Chien. But for this interval he resided there until his death in 1827.

Aug. 17th Maj- Morgan⁴ arrives and assumes the comand of this place

Aug. 19th Mr Findleys⁵ boat arrives

Aug. 21^t—Another Canoe from Mackinaw Mr Henly of St. Louis—

Aug. 20th Cool morning— Mr Warner arrives in a canoe from Mackinaw

” 23^d—Sabbath—five or six Indian trading boats from Mackinaw—they immediately proceed for St Louis, and intend going up the “Missouri” river

Aug. 24th three months since I commenced school keeping—conclude to keep a few days longer, as some of the inhabitants are anxious to make arrangements for the continuence of the school—

Aug. 27th Finish my school this day

“ 28th After Breakfast, Walk into the country—two men in company with me having their fowling pieces for diversion of shooting birds, happened to fire within a short distance of the fort—were overtaken by a serjt. and file of men, and taken to the fort, for violating a late order prohibiting any one firing within 600 yards of the garrison—they were soon released and rejoined me—in high spirits about their frolic

Aug. 30th Sabbath—One year since I arrived at Prairie du Chien—How differently does the Past appear, when viewed in contrast with what our flattering hopes had taught us to expect from the Future!—This, was full of high hopes and expectations— That, is plain reality, in which we behold few transactions worthy of being remembered, and fewer that have equaled the anticipations of our fertile imaginations—still we continue in the same pursuit of ideal happiness—Disappointed in one object, our fertile minds fix upon another equally fallacious, and pursue it with equal ardor, till some fairer phantom,

⁴ Major Willoughby Morgan was a native of Virginia who entered the army in 1812. At the close of the war he took over Mackinac from the British and commanded it for a few months. In the summer of 1816 he commanded the detachment of troops which reoccupied Prairie du Chien and began the construction of the first Fort Crawford. Here he was relieved by Colonel Chambers early in 1817, but returned later as noted in the diary. Most of his remaining years were passed as commander at Fort Crawford, where he died in April, 1832. He was succeeded by Colonel Zachary Taylor, of Mexican War and presidential fame.

⁵ Probably John L. Findley, who had been engaged at Prairie du Chien as sutler's clerk and as an independent trader. He was made clerk of the court on the organization of Crawford County in 1818. In 1821 he was killed by Indians in the vicinity of Lake Pepin.

seizes our imagination, or till it comes to naught. All the human race are naturally inclined to seek for happiness. But many, very many continue through life "grasping at a shadow and in the end lose the substance"

"How vain are all things here below,

"How false, and yet how fair;

"Each pleasure hath its poison too,

"And every sweet a snare.

"The brightest things below the sky

"Give but a flattering light;

"We should suspect some danger nigh,

"When we possess delight."—Watts—

September 1st Engage to work for a few days with Mr. Mann [Munn?]⁶ house carpenter.

Sept. 2^d Four boats from Mackinaw—2, intending to go up the St. Peters river the other 2 down the Mississippi—

Sept. 6th Sabbath—A meeting for religious worship at the school-house Exercises performed by the reverend Mr. Mann—his text from the last chap. of St. Mark "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned![""]— the first meeting of the kind I have attended since I left Newfane—

Sept. 10th Commence boarding with Mr. Mann, \$20 per month, he is about opening an American tavern in this place

Boats arriving daily from Mackinaw,—no news—

Sept. 11 Mr Forsyth⁷ Indian Agent for the Missouri territory arrives—also a Mr Tanner in search of a brother⁸ who has been 28 years among the Indians—being taken when 9 years old

⁶ Of this man we have learned nothing other than the items presented by Keyes in the diary before us. From these it appears that he was a preacher as well as a carpenter. He went with Keyes down river in 1819 and seems to have located at Clarksville, Missouri.

⁷ Thomas Forsyth was Indian agent at Fort Armstrong (now Rock Island, Illinois) from 1819 to 1830. Back of the earlier date lay a long period of creditable activity on the Northwestern frontier. Forsyth was a half brother of John Kinzie of Chicago, and from 1803 to 1812 the two were partners, Kinzie with headquarters at Chicago, Forsyth at Peoria.

⁸ This was John Tanner, one of the most tragic figures in the history of the Northwest. About the close of the Revolution a Chippewa squaw in the Saginaw River region lost a son. To quiet her grief, her husband led a raiding party to Kentucky and there stole young Tanner, a boy of nine years, and presented him

Sept. 12th Read late newspapers at mr Johnsons

Sept. 13th Sabbath Attend meeting—very few of the French attend—as their “Catholic” Priests have made them believe it is certain damnation, to go [to] a “heritic” meeting

Sept. 14th Rolette returns from Mackinaw with two boats—

Sept. 17th Afflicted with the tooth ache Mrs- Mann tries to draw my tooth without effect—apply various remedies to no purpose

Sept. 19th the surgeon in the garrison makes three fruitless attempts to extract my troublesome tooth—each time was like the shock of a little earthquake—he then attempts to burn the marrow—but all to no purpose, it will ache—

Sept. 22^d—Agree to work one week for Mr Ayrd, at tending his new horse mill lately put in operations with two run of stones—

Sept. 27th Sabbath—Meeting as usual

” 29th Walk out to Roletts mill (formerly Shaws) Mr Andrews is hanging a new pair of stones—they appear likely to do considerable buisness—

Sept 30th Out of business at present—am calculating to try one hard winters work in getting lumber from the Pinery provisions scarce is one obstacle to my undertaking—

Oct. 1^t have cured my tooth ache by filling the hollow with cotton—

Oct 3^d Cold, and high wind

Oct. 4th—Sabbath—Meeting at the schoolhouse as usual—but few people attend, except soldiers, who behave very orderly and decent—

to his wife as a substitute for the child who had died. Notwithstanding the motive for the abduction, the child was fearfully abused by his captors and eventually was sold to an Ottawa squaw near Petoskey. By her he was kindly treated and with her migrated to the Red River country. Here he lived for many years, his presence being noted by several travelers from 1801 on. He performed some useful service for Lord Selkirk in the latter's contest with the Northwest Company, and when Selkirk visited the United States in 1817 he proceeded to advertise for Tanner's white relatives. As a result the long lost relative was found and returned to civilization. But he had become too thorough an Indian in habit and breeding ever to be at home among the whites. After a stormy career at Mackinac and Sault Ste. Marie he disappeared in 1846 as mysteriously as when stolen from his parents in boyhood. The brother of Henry R. Schoolcraft was assassinated from ambush, and at the same time Tanner's hut (where he lived alone) was found burned and its owner missing. A vigorous search was made for him on the supposition that he had committed the murder, but he was never found. Years later an officer of the garrison at Fort Brady, who had directed his men in the search for Tanner, confessed on his deathbed that he himself had been the assassin. Tamer was known as the “white Indian.” Dr. Edwin James wrote his life story, *Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner* (New York, 1830).

Oct. 5th Walk into the country—take a range on some of the high hills—have a beautiful prospect of the Prairie and adjacent Mississippi—gather a few hickory nuts and return—

Oct. 6th Spend the day in writing and reading—

Oct 25th Sabbath—the Weather warm and dry—high wind—the fires are performing their accustomed autumnal rout over the hills—have been engaged some time in small jobs of Carpenter work, and neglected journalizing—

Oct 28th Birth Day—

26 years have rolled away since first I drew the vital air! and what has been the result, may with propriety be asked? Surely 26 years must have produced something worthy of remembrance.—To pursue the question, What have I been aiming at these many years? or have I run thus far at random without an end in view! Nature, Reason and Revelation, all tell me I had my Being from some Superior Power; he has placed me here on Earth—and for a limited time is certain from what I see of others of my fellow mortals who are daily quitting the stage of action!—He has endowed me with Reason, which is a certain proof I am intended for some end, superior to that of the Brute Creation—

I will now take a retrospect of the 26 years (and perhaps the greatest part) of my life; that have flown to Eternity—

I was born among the rugged mountains of Vermont—whose robust inhabitants are mostly cultivators of the soil they possess in independence and peace—

Where Luxury and Dissipation, those deadly foes of Religion and Liberty are hardly known—

My Father removed from Shrewsbury Mass. to Newfane Vt. about the year 1788 and entered on a small farm entirely new, and a soil as rough and heavy timbered as most any of the Vermont mountains produce; but by industry and perseverance, has succeeded in bringing it under a tolerable state of cultivation, and with the products thereof, has been enabled to support a numerous family, and bring them up in habits of soberness and industry.

Being thus early accustomed to look upon labour as no disgrace, but rather a necessary Blessing for the promotion of health and happiness I was contented to toil with unremitting diligence towards acquiring

a livelihood. The country being new I had but a slender chance of getting instruction at school; however I was early taught that learning was better than riches, that without an Education I should be liable to repeated embarrassments, and must expect to rank among the dregs of Society. These early precepts; and a natural disposition thereto, excited me to learning and reading soon became my ruling passion—I read with avidity all kinds of books, but those of mere amusement engrossed my chief attention—indeed I indulged myself to excess, and every leisure moment was occupied in poring over some musty author—

at 8 years of age I was put to reading the Bible, but by frequent delays it was 4 years before I finished it. At 11 years of age I lost my mother, a misfortune I was too young to realize in its full extent.—My memory still retains many a useful precept I learnt from her lips; She was a professor of Religion, and, as I hope and trust, a sincere Christian.—

Days, and weeks, and years glided away with little variation; reading continued to be my chief delight which rendered me more dull than otherwise, in company with my juvenil companions—I generally attended Christian Worship every Sabbath; but the pious impressions there made were mostly transcient, and soon gave place to visionary schemes of worldly happiness. In my 20th year I was drafted from the militia to hold myself in readiness to march at a moments warning, in consequence of the war between American and Britian. Orders soon came for us to proceed to the frontiers, but the war being unpopular; this was considered as an artifice to wheedle the militia into Canada, to assist in the conquest—therefore most of the men chose to risque the consequenc and abide at home—

Although I was naturally of a quiet disposition, yet I was pleased with the prospect of seeing the world as I thought, (having scarcely been ten miles from home before). I resolved to go, my friends supposing it to be a gone case with me; not expecting I should ever return. however, after nine days tedious march we arrived at Burlington Vt. on the east side of Champlain Lake, where we encamped 3 weeks then crossed the Lake to Plattsburg N. Y. and remained 4 weeks, from from thence we removed to Champlain near Canada line, we were soon joined by about 6 or 8000 regular troops.—Both threats

and flattery were tried in vain, to induce the militia to assist in carrying war, and devastation among the inhabitants of Canada—the regulars soon after returned to winter quarters and the militia were disbanded. From this little excursion I returned well sated with military Honor, and was happy to again enjoy the sweets of a rural life

On the 28th of Oct. 1813 I arrived at 21 years of age. I then considered I was just commencing to act for myself,—the wide world was before me, and though I had long anticipated this day, and in imagination planned many a scheme for wealth and fame, I found the road not so smooth and easy as I had imagined.—The ensuing winter I engaged to teach the school in my native village,—the ensuing spring I went to Northfield, Mass. and hired to a farmer, but not liking my situation I soon returned, and farmed for an old neighbor—in the winter I again commenced school keeping this was irksome business, but not so laborious as farming—

on the first day of April 1815 I made an unfortunate blow with an axe and split my left foot this disabled me for four months and at times is still troublesome in Sept. I agreed with a Clothier to serve two seasons of four months each to learn the art of dying and dressing woollen cloth—in January I again commenced my school in the same district as formerly—

the following summer, 1817 [1816], I hired at farming in a neighboring town. the succeeding winter I completed my apprenticeship at the Clothing business, and in the latter part taught school as usual two months in an adjoining town—

I began to grow tired of the way I had passed my time for several years—to work hard for other people, and gain little— I had flattered myself with the hope of gaining a little property, uniting myself with an amiable female, and enjoying the unrivaled pleasures of a rural and domestic life. The prospect of a profitable employment was precarious, all kinds of business seemed at a stand in this situation of affairs I bid adieu to the [some words crossed out here] and my other friends and connections and started on the journey with which this journal commences—

Nov. 15th Sabbath, It has been remarkable pleasant for some time past.—Mr Mann discontinues preaching for the present

A boat arrives from St Louis, for the Sutler—

Nov. 18th Work for Mr Ayrd making a bolting chest— Mr- Botillia arrives from St Louis lost his boat on the rapids of the river Du Moine with considerable property for himself and others—

Nov 22^d Sabbath—A Funeral on the death of Madam La Point^e—ceremonies performed in the Roman Catholic form—

Nov. 26th Continue working at Ayrd's mill—Pleasant for the season—

Nov 27th Ride to town in the evening—about a dozen recruits or reenlisted soldiers frolicking on their bounty money of 6 dollars per mon—

Nov. 30th Take my gun and go a hunting find no game—explore Prairie de Souix one or two handsome farms might be cultivated here—Cut my name on a small oak at the upper end of the Prairie opposite a high bluff of rocks it being the extent of my travels up the Missisipi—

Dec. 1 Remove to town—Commence boarding with Mr. Findly 15 dollars per month

Dec. 4th Snow fell about one inch the first this season—

Dec. 5th Pleasant—

Dec. 6th Sabbath—Cold and windy ice floating down the Mississippi in large quantities—

Dec. 7th the river frozen over

Dec 22 Commences snowing—at night snow about 3 inches deep

Dec. 23 Cloudy moderate weather

Dec. 25th Christmas—Observed by the people as a religious day—some as a drunken day—

Dickson and Music arrive with a large drove of cows and oxen—recieve a letter from Shaw—in the evening, get entangled with company at the tavern, who have a drinking frolic—Findly breaks his jaw and that breaks up the scrape

Dec 26th have entered into engagements with M^c. Nair.¹⁰ to go to the

⁹ This was Josette Antaya, wife of Charles La Pointe, a pioneer of Prairie du Chien. Her father, Pierre Antaya, was one of the founders of Prairie du Chien, locating there in 1781. Her mother was a woman of the Fox tribe.

¹⁰ Apparently Thomas McNair, who had come to Prairie du Chien in the capacity of clerk in the sutler's store of his uncle, Alexander McNair of Missouri, who was later (1820-24) to become first governor of the state of Missouri. The younger McNair married a daughter of one of the French residents of Prairie du Chien, whereupon the uncle is said to have concluded his business was not being attended to with sufficient assiduity and sent out Wilfred Owens to take charge of it.

pinry of Black river to cut lumber he furnishes himself and one man I furnish my self and an horse—

January 1^t 1819 a day of feasting and revelry among all ranks of people—it is the custom with the French to salute the females with a kiss, the males by a shake of the hands, to signify that they bury old animosities and make friends—

January 7th 1819 Start for Black river—7 trains or sleds with one horse to each and 15 men in company, part are indian traders, the others are going to cut pine timber—my horse proves refractory in starting but after getting on the ice he goes well—encamp 3 miles from town when part of our company go back to get ready, and take a fair start—

Jan 8th—Our company rejoins us and we start in good season—the snow is about 3 inches deep, but thawing the ice is good

Jan 9th Before night the snow is mostly converted into water and runing top of the ice—however we make a good days travel—

Jan. 10th Sabbath—the water about 2 inches deep on top of the ice—proceed with caution, and pass with difficulty several places where the river is open—

Jan 11th Change in the weather, cold the ice clear and smooth—drive briskly—enter Black river about 90 or 100 miles from Prairie du Chien drive a few miles on Black river, and we find a place open—encamp—

Jan. 12th Hold a consultation how to proceed, after searching some-time drag our loads $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on bare ground, find ice and by shifting and turning arrive at Morans trading house—

Jan. 13th Spend most of the day in cutting trees & stubs that will probably obstruct our rafts in the spring—the traders go no farther with us—we proceed a short distance

Jan. 14th Drive briskly all day—the ice smooth and good—the weather severe—

Jan. 15th Start early—getting impatient to find good pine—see enough that is not good—

Jan 16th Make Black river falls about noon—after searching some-time, conclude to retrace our steps 2 or 3 miles to a noble pinry but some distance from the river examine the situation of the place, and, commence cutting timber for our cabin—

Jan 17th Sabbath. Build our house commences snowing near night—

Jan 18th "Cache" or conseal part of our provision to prevent the Indians robing us—prepare to enter the pinery tomorrow—

Jan. 19th Snowing—Commence cutting pine—the parties are three as follows 1^t Lupiere, St. Martin, DuPlisie and Charlow—2^d Bau-ritt and Seymore—3 McNair, Spaniel and myself—

Jan. 20th Select the best and streightest pine, and hew it square from 12 to 15 inches—the longest we intend cutting is 27½ feet the other lengths 12½ or 25 feet

Jan. 24th Sabbath Agree not to work on Sunday—the hired men work for themselves

Jan. 26th A party of four men arrive to cut timber for Rolette

Jan 27th Greene, a frenchman, starts for Prairie du Chien—

Roletts men commence cutting timber—we object to to their falling any, among ours that is down

Jan. 29th Mc Nair hunts today and kills a Buck.

Jan. 30th we cut timber near the first rapids

Jan. 31^t. Sabbath Early in the morning take a range to the eastward see some good pines, nothing else of importance—

Mc Nair and myself go up to the falls—about 3 miles, I judge the river decends in 20 rods 25 or 30 feet—We searched out a seat for a sawmill—put our names the day year and native place on a piece of lead, placed it under a stone at the foot of a tree cut the initials of our names on the tree &C—and returned

Feb 2^d Pleasant weather—Write to Mr. Findley by one of Rolets men who starts to morrow for the prairie

Feb. 4th Cloudy and rainy—Evening fair and pleasant—Walk out and survey the beauty of the Heavens—the moon is little past the first q^r—the stars bright and sparkling—in contemplating the wonderful works of Creation, the mind is soon overwhelmed in infinite variety, and endless extent, and returns unsatisfied to ruminate on things within its reach—My thoughts are turned to my native home,—I fancy my fathers family sitting in a circle around a Cheerful fire Oh what happiness should I enjoy to return once more and see them thus in health, and in the paths of Virtue—But alas! thousands of miles intervene and a thousand obstacles may obstruct my

wishes—My hope is in the mercy and goodness of God—my heart is stubborn and rebellious but my sincere and earnest prayer to God is, that he would soften and subdue it to his holy will, through the merits of my Redeemer, Jesus Christ—

Feb. 5th Have a misunderstanding and high words with Mc. Nair who denys one bargin and wants to make another more to his own interest—however we compromise the matter in the evening—

Feb. 6th appearance of colder weather—an Indian and his squaw comes to our camp they beg some corn and promise to hunt

Feb 7th Sabbath—Warm and rainy—the most uncomon weather I ever recollect for the time of year—no snow and the ground thawing—

Feb. 8th Snow in the morning—it soon dissolves—clears off warm—A gang of Winibago Indians arrive and encamp near us—they are begging and wanting to trade—tell them we have nothing to give or to sell but they must hunt for a living, as we work for ours. however we give them somthing to eat

Feb. 13th No snow—gear our horses and try to haul timber one horse proves contrary—beat him severely—

Feb. 14th Sabbath—Snow last night 3 or 4 inches—Mc Nair kills a deer the indians kill 3—

Feb. 16th More snow—hire Seymour to haul with my horse—

Feb. 18th finish hauling for the present

Feb 19th Snow falls about 6 inches

Feb 21^t Sabbath—Pleasant—lay the bottom of our raft—

Feb 27 Finished hauling all we have hewed.

Feb 28th Sabbath Snows 3 inches—Pleasant

March 1^t Severe Cold—saw shinglestuff—

March 2^d Colder—Commence making a skiff of two large trees more than 3 feet through—our indian neighbors leave us.

March 3^d Snows all day attempt hauling our skiff trees but find them too heavy

March 5th Snows very fast—work at shingles

March 7th 2 months since we left Prairie du Chien—squally weather—

March 21^t Sabbath. for three or four days past it has been most severe cold weather—indeed it has been cold and snowy most of the time since March commenced—snow is about 20 inches

March 24th Moderate weather, bind up 7 thousand shingles—commences snowing before night—

March 28th Sabbath Snow about 2 inches last night—very pleasant saw a Robin symptoms of returning spring—the men are all at work making Canoes or paddles—I turn out and cut 9 setting poles have hard work in hacking them through the snow

Sabbath Eve. Clouds up—thunder, Lightning rain and hail—

March 29th Snow and blustering weather Roletts men coming short of provision 2 of them start for a trading house of his to get some—

March 30th Set fire to our tarpit.

” 31^t Our pit burst out in the night which made us scamper in our flaps, cold as it was

April 1^t South wind—warm—

April 3^d Work hard loading our raft three men to help us—prospect of the river breaking soon

April 9th The Catholic french observe a fast in remembrance of the Crucifixion of our Saviour—we the Americans join with them in observeing the fast.

Ice floating—and the river rising

April 10 Rainy till noon—the wind shifts N. W.—Geese Ducks and pigeons plenty

April 11th Sabbath this day is kept sacred by the french in remembrance of the Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ

April 12th Pleasant—ready to start only wait for high water and the rest of our company to get ready

April 13th Start our raft and move them down a mile or 2 to anchor in deeper water encamp on board them at night—

April 14th Our Company all ready, 8 rafts in number—start about 10 oclock AM. run 2 or 3 miles, and we have the misfortune to run our raft on an island in a very bad situation—as we had previously agreed to assist each other in trouble, they all stopped as soon as possible, and came to our assistance—take our raft in 3 pieces and with much hard lifting in the water as cold as it could be without freezing we succeed in getting off—before night two other rafts run aground—

April 15th The river rising the rafts fast yesterday one got off without much difficulty—Roletes men leave 2 of their rafts—Mc Nair

undertakes to manage our small raft, Spaniole and myself manage the other two together, we outfloat all the other rafts—rainy—stop before night on account of their hallooming from behind

April 16th Start early—go pretty well with constant rowing till near night when we strike several times with violence against the shore which shatters our raft Bauritt sticks on a sawyer and is obliged [to] leave a part of his raft—after much trouble we anchor in a good harbour—it rains hard—build up our shelter, cook our supper and go to sleep contentedly.

April 17th Cold and wet—commences snowing—the river rose only one inch last night—overtake Bauritt who parted his cable last night and drifted till he struck a sand beach—all hands stop to help him off—afternoon, we run foul of another raft that turns our course into shallow water—obliged to wait for assistance—evening, anchor a little above the upper snie (or channel) that leads to the Mississippi—from this place, intend to double man our rafts, and make 2 trips as the navigation is difficult.

April 18th—Sabbath—Long shall I remem[ber] this day—the dangers and difficulties we have escaped by the mercies of God, I think I shall not soon forget— Seated on a bunch of shingles, after the toils of the day are over, my thoughts are turned to my native home. my friends and relations I hope and trust are attending the worship of God in a proper place, while I am here in an uncivilized land tugging with the oar and handspike

We started erly from our encampment a little above the upper snie or channel that leads to the Missisipi, with part of our rafts, double manned—run a short distance very well—then come to short bends in the river overhung with trees, whose tops frequently brush the water, the current rapid, our raft became in a manner unmanageable, and we dashed from shore to shore and raked by the trees that seemed to threaten us with immediate destruction; 2 horses were swept overboard, but swam ashore, we had an elegant skiff and canoe broken, lost several pieces of timber and our raft almost a wreck—however by the Providence of God we escaped with our lives, and less loss of property than we had reason to expect. and anchored at a place called “le Chepoie” a little below an old Indian trading house. find 2 of Rolettes men here who had been in quest of provision hear of

the death of old Mr Ayrd at the Prairie du Chien,—Refresh ourselves, and return for the other rafts—hard rowing against the current—come down with the other rafts in safty being better acquainted with the best channel—encamp for the night—

April 19th Cloudy, and prospect of rain—the bottoms are all overflowed for many miles.—the river is still rising—the Mississippi is no more than 1½ mile distant but we have 20 to go before we enter it We have another difficult passage to effect and start with only 2 rafts to look out the best channel—get fast with one raft, the other succeeds in finding a passage—

April 20th After much trouble and perplexity, by cutting some rafts in two, and part unloading others we succeed in getting all through about sunset this day—the current is very gentle, but the river spreads into many different channels, and these again are obstructed by old trees, stumps and sand-bars which rendered it difficult to find a channel large enough for our rafts to pass.

April 21^t. Fair weather—start some small rafts to try the passage a few miles further—the people return and report favorably, get our horses once more on board, and set forward— 11 oclock A. M. enter the Lake, where we consider ourselves past most of our dangers and hardships; and I have reason to render thanks to an ever Merciful and Benificent God, who has protected us, unworthy Beings, thus far in safty.

April 22^d. Get under way very early—float slowly, as there is but little current in the lake. the feathered choir are tuning their melodious notes, as a prelude to a beautiful day, and vegetation, which, but lately appeared in the cold embrace of death, is now breaking forth into life and animation!— enter the Mississippi about 10 oclock A. M.—a large horde of indians encamped on the point 12 oclock pass the River “Racine”¹¹ it comes in on the West, its water is said to be very clear; it has quite a green appearance at a distance,—pass the River O’shaw¹² a little before sunset it comes in on the east—

April 23^d Loose our cables at daybreak and float away—sunrise, meet old Mr. Grosler returning with provisions to the assistance of Roletts party—as we had relieved their necessities in Black river, he

¹¹ Modern Root River, in Houston County, Minnesota.

¹² Modern Coon River, in Vernon County, Wisconsin.

now testifies his gratitude by tendering whatever he has that he thinks will refresh us, as salt fresh Bread, old spirits. pass the Iowa River on the west— in the afternoon pass a high bluff called by the French Cap' o' lie,¹³ from garlicks that grow at its base.—Mc.Nair, Lupiere and Bauritt leave us in a canoe intending to meet their wives before they sleep sunset—pass a party of French cutting timber.

April 24th Expect to reach Prairie du Chien by 12 oclock—morning rainy—8 oclock arrive at Prairie de Souix—

11 Mc. Nair and a party meet us to aid us in soon heave in sight of the town—the wind contrary, we are obliged to anchor a few miles above. bring in our raft in the evening

April 25th Sabbath Commence boarding with Mr. Man—he intends to go down the river with me.—

” 26th Divide timber with Mc. Nair. prepare to move down the river in a few days—Dickson, Andrews and Owens,¹⁴ are preparing an expedition up Black river to build a sawmill at the falls
April 27th Warm weather—the river rising—A trading boat arrives from St. Peter's river they have made a bad trade—having but little peltry to what they usuly got—Dr. Wiley is dead, he was the principal manager of one of the trading companies—several of their men have died, others are sick—an epedemical disorder has visited them
April 29th South wind for several days, which prevents me starting with my raft.

25 or 30 canoes of Indians, of the Sack Nation arrive—Also a Band of the Souix these nations have been at war they hold a Council at the Indian Agents and agree to make Peace—but they generally break it when they have an oportunity—

April 30th Leave “the Prairie du Chien” as I expect forever, was obliged to sacrifice considerable property.

2 oclock, Mr Man and myself having bid adieu to our friends, push off our raft and float pleasantly down the river—

¹³ “Cap o' Lie,” from the French “Cap à l'Ail,” meaning Cape Garlic, was later transformed into the town name “Capoli.” Garlic Cape is a bold headland on the Iowa side of the river, which was commented upon by most early voyagers on the Mississippi, e. g., by Long in 1817.

¹⁴ Wilfred Owens was a Kentuckian who came to Prairie du Chien as a partner of Alexander McNair. He was one of the early probate judges of Crawford County. In August, 1821 he committed suicide by cutting his throat, the act being supposedly due to mental derangement.

Mr Man sleeps, while I watch our motions, and note down these remarks.—

I have spent near two years at Prairie du Chien, with little satisfaction to myself; and perhaps as little acquisition of property however it is folly to mourn mispent time.

Pass "Pike's hill," nearly opposite the mouth of the Ouisconsin; selected by Gen. Pike as a suitable scite for a fort.¹⁵—the evening pleasant—we conclude to run all night, and watch alternately.—the latter part of the night we both get to sleep awake in the morning and find all safe—

May 1st Beautiful morn. Arrange our affairs in complete order—build a place for cooking, and live away in great style the river takes a long stretch without turning Pass the Lead Dubuque mines about 5. PM. let the raft run all night—both of us sleep a great part of the time—escape in safty—although very carless—

May 2^d Sabbath—the wind shifts to the East—a perogue passes us for Rock river my canoe breaks loose—save it by jumping in the river, and swimming ashore. the wind against us—ly by in the afternoon start out of our harbour by hard pushing—9 oclock in the evening strike on a sawyer and lie all night—high wind.

May 3^d Work most of the day in getting off the sawyer—the wind too high for starting—a heavy shower at night—thunder lightning wind and rain—

May 4th Start at day break, frequent showers—the wind against us lie by most of the day

May 5th Start early—9 oclock pass Boutilles [Bouthillier's] trading house, also an Indian village at the head of the rapids—the river is rapid 22 miles to Rock island on which stands fort "Armstrong" the country most of the way looks beautiful, gently sloping towards the river, covered with the greenest verdure and blossoms of spring. go down the West channel of rock island arrive at fort Armstrong 5 oclock P. M.

this fort is handsomly situated on the lower point of an island, the shore on which it stands is rock rising 12 or 15 feet above the water—at present there is only a Lieutenant and 12 men in the garrison—

¹⁵ At the time of his expedition up the Mississippi in 1805.

stay about an hour and push off float all night—take turns in keeping watch have a pleasant run—the moon about the full.

May 6th We have a side wind that keeps us rowing constantly to avoid running ashore—stop before night—Prospect of rain

May 7th A shower last night—Breakfast and conclude to start, with a head wind—a shower the wind changes West and drives us under the East shore—strike on a sawyer, unload the hind part of our raft and get off—Evening pleasant—1 oclock morn I being on the watch find myself among sandbars—endeavour to avoid them and stick fast—work hard in the water 2 hours then lighten the raft and get off—run well the rest of the night

May 8th Chilly morn.—several showers thunder Lightning wind and rain—

May 9th Sabbath—Passed old fort Madison¹⁶ 10 oclock last Evening, had a fine run last night—enter the rapids 18 miles long—ten oclock A. M. arrive at fort Edward[s]¹⁷ opposite the River des Moine—the garrison left the fort this spring Mr. Belt,¹⁸ the Indian Factor, the Contractors Agent, and a few hirelings are all that remain—we dine with Mr Belt this fort is small, but handsomely situated on a point of land that overlooks the river on the East or Illinois side

3 oclock—start again—meet a boat under sail for Prairie du Chien—also a gale of wind that lays us by—sunset pass the end of Fox Slue so called 9 miles long—Mr Man unwell goes to bed. I have to watch alone Pleasant Evening (*Pass the site of Quincy May 10 1819*)¹⁹

¹⁶ Fort Madison was established in 1808 on the site of the modern Iowa city of the same name. In the summer of 1813 the fort was besieged by Indians for several weeks; the garrison finally escaped by night, burning the fort as they withdrew.

¹⁷ Fort Edwards, opposite the city of Keokuk, Iowa, was established in the summer of 1816. A factory was established here two years later. The fort was abandoned in 1824.

¹⁸ Robert B. Belt of Maryland, who came to Fort Madison in 1812 as assistant to John W. Johnson, the factor. Belt was with Johnson for a time at Prairie du Chien and then received the position here noted.

¹⁹ The italicized words were evidently written at a later time. Two years later Keyes, on a horseback journey through the wilderness, camped for the night on this spot. He was so taken with it that he resolved "if God would give him a foothold here" he would make it his permanent dwelling place. This resolution was responsible for the first log cabin, built on the site of Quincy in 1823, the home of the first three settlers, Keyes, Rose, and Wood. See Keyes family genealogy (Brattleboro, 1880), 7-8.

May 10th Pleasant. the wind in our favor 11 oclock pass Two Rivers so called—2 oclock, P. M. arrive at Bay Charles, I take the Canoe and explore it—two islands lie high up it—pass round them, see an Indian grave recently set up—Suppose it to be that of an Indian lately killed by the Whites, of which we heard the news at fort Edward—a little further at an old Indian encampment, I find a rod peeled and painted Red, stuck in the ground. and on the top of it was tied a piece of Scalp. bring it away—3 oclock Pass Missouri²⁰ Bear Creek here the Indian was killed, a town Hannibal²⁰ was commenced, but the inhabitants have left it. 26 miles to Louisiana Mo the first settlement on the river— Sunset, arrive at Gilberts Licks. A man formerly from Vermont lives here of the name of Hubbard—a town has been lately laid out by the proprietors called Saverton—we stop here for the night—a man promises us a deer by sunrise

May 11th The man brings in a deer according to his promise—Salt works are established at these Licks tho not at present in operation—have 32 kettles, and allow they can make 10 bushels per day—purchase some fresh Butter, milk &C—and start—10 oclock we were met by a most violent squall of wind—which drove us into the river, and finally quite across it. its violence was so great that every moment it seemed the raft would break in pieces the waves dashed over it with fury, and washed many things overboard—

I lost my hat in the scrape, and our canoe broke loose, but I fortunately caught it. towards evening, being busy in adjusting our things we ran on a Sawyer that stopt us for the night.

May 12th Unload part of the raft—find the snag, and cut it off—arrive at Louisiana village 12 oclock

this town is 2 miles below the mouth of Salt river, and was lately appointed the seat of Justice for Pike County

Not fancying this place very well, we soon pushed for Clarksville, 12 miles below the wind was unfavorable but the current pretty strong arrive at Clarksville about sunset—

this looks like a village in the wilderness.²¹ however I like the situation better I think than Louisiana—

²⁰ Apparently later interpolations.

²¹ According to the local history the first cabin on the site of Clarksville was built in 1816. At the time of Keyes' visit, therefore, the place was still a new settlement.

May 18th A Public sale of lots in this village is to be held, on the 15th inst. we conclude to await the result.²²

A thunder shower, the wind sudenly changes N. W.—cold and high winds.

May 14th Saunter about and examine the town site, there is but one frame house, and half- a dozen of hewed logs—tis said to have a fine settlement back of respectable and wealthy farmers

May 15th They commence the sale of lots,—sold about 50 lots this they varied from \$100 to \$240—the people who come in from the country appear mostly like respectable farmers, I conclude to tarry in this place a while

May 16th Sabbath a meeting for religious worship preaching by the Rev. Mr. Riddle, Baptist. Acts XIII. 32. 33

May 19th Go in Company with R. Burns to some deer lieks to watch for deer 7 miles down the river 1½ back in the country kill one deer. tormented by mosketos

May 20th return in the afternoon, find an other canoe work hard in taking them both up the river—

May 21^t Attend a rolling bee this morning Mr. Ewings²³

— 22^d help Mr. Burns plant corn.

May 23^d Sabbath. read most of the day

May 24th Go a hunting, find no game—ascend the highest summit have a prospect of the river and adjacent country it looks beautiful on the other side of the river—

June 1^t work for mr Man carpentering—

June 13th Bargin with Col. Millar for a lot in Clarksville price \$180

June 16th bargain with Col. Miller to lathe a house at st. Louis price.

June 24th Mr. Man's family arrives from St Louis

July 4 Sabbath. Mr Phelan's infant died last evening. buried to day

July 5th Ride 4 miles in the country, to raising a grist mill for Mr Mulheron the country through which I passed rolling, wood land, mostly good farming land the farmers appear to be thriving

July 6th Mr. Man taken with the Ague and Fever several people sick in town—uncomon warm.

²² The town was laid out by Governor John Miller; this was the first public sale of lots to be held.

²³ James Burns and Samuel Ewing were the two first settlers of Clarksville.

July 9th A heavy shower, I got caught in the rain in the highest perspiration—take cold with symptoms of the ague—

July 11th Sabbath I have been quite sick people are taking sick daily.

July 18th Sabbath it still continues sickly, myself among the rest—

July 29th Continue weak and feeble, with much bodily pain—very sickly throughout the country

Here I discontinued writing in my journal, that is from July 29th 1819 to August 1821 and now I conclude to take it up again if not too Lazy. I will put down some of the principal events of the intermediate time, as my recollection serves me, so as to make it hang together—

Sickness raged to a greater degree than was said ever to be known in the country before—many died particularly new comers—I continued in a weak and debilitated state, just able to crawl and help myself or I should have been badly off—as I had a predeliction for settling in the state of Illinois, in sept. (1819) I made out to get down about 20 miles on the other side of the river to a place called “Salt Prairie” the highest settlement then on that side of the river.—in the latter part of Oct. I commenced a small school, of 10 or 12 pupils; more however sometimes than I knew how to attend however my disease gradually wore away, and my strength returned. in Nov. wrote to Father—I got my raft from Clarksville and started for St. Louis the last of Nov.—saw Seth Kidder in St Louis wrote to Brother, Royal—the river was very low, and I had bad luck and lost part of my timber in going down—sold the remainder for \$200 return to Salt Prairie and spend the winter there.

AD. 1820. Feb. I went to Edwardsville the seat of Justice for Madison County. it is a considerable town, tho of but few years growth, about 12 miles East from the Missisipi river I obtained many numbers of soldier lots offered for sale by speculators there.

Feb. 19th—started out to view the Bounty Lands. four others in Company; viz; Capt. J. Nixon, Mr. D. Dutton, Mr S. Gates, & Mr John Wood being all well mounted and equipt for the woods

* * * 24

²⁴ The portion omitted comprises notes on the lands viewed and marked by the party for possible future entry.

March 1820 John Wood and myself form a partnership to go on to the frontiers and commence farming together accordingly prepare ourselves with provisions farming utensils &C as well as our slender means would permit 2 small yoke of steers a young Cow & a small though promising lot of swine: our whole amount of property was did not probably exceed \$250. paid 50 & 60 dollars per yoke for small 4 year old steers \$17. for small heifer. 6¼ cts per lb. for fresh pork. 75 cts per bushel for Corn or potatoes \$8 per barrel for flour \$4. per bushel for salt and other things in proportion